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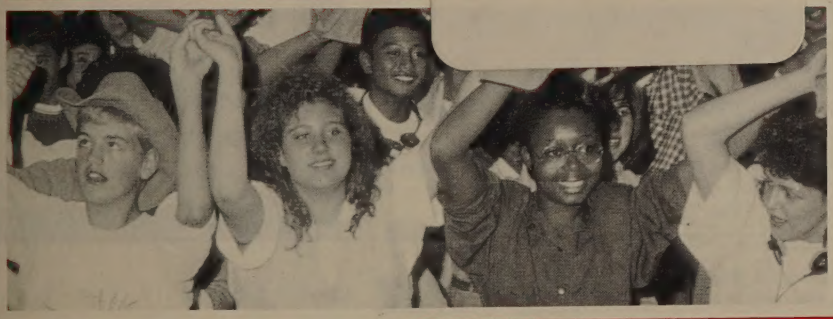

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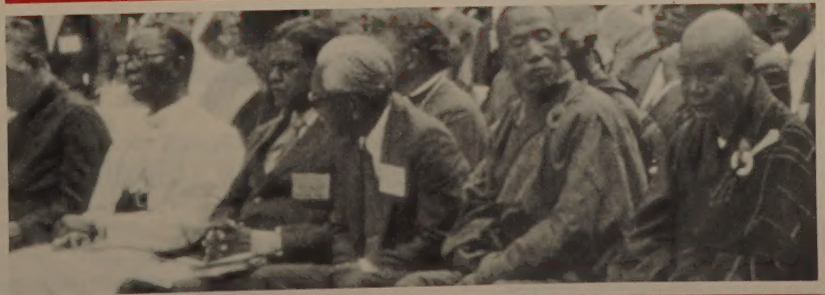

livingCity
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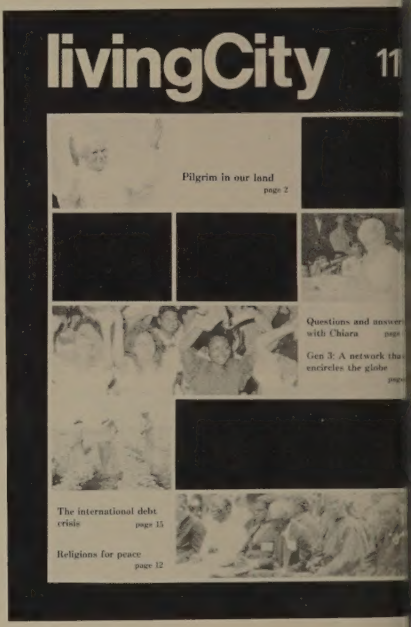

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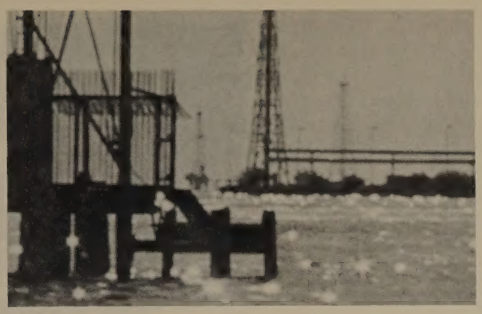

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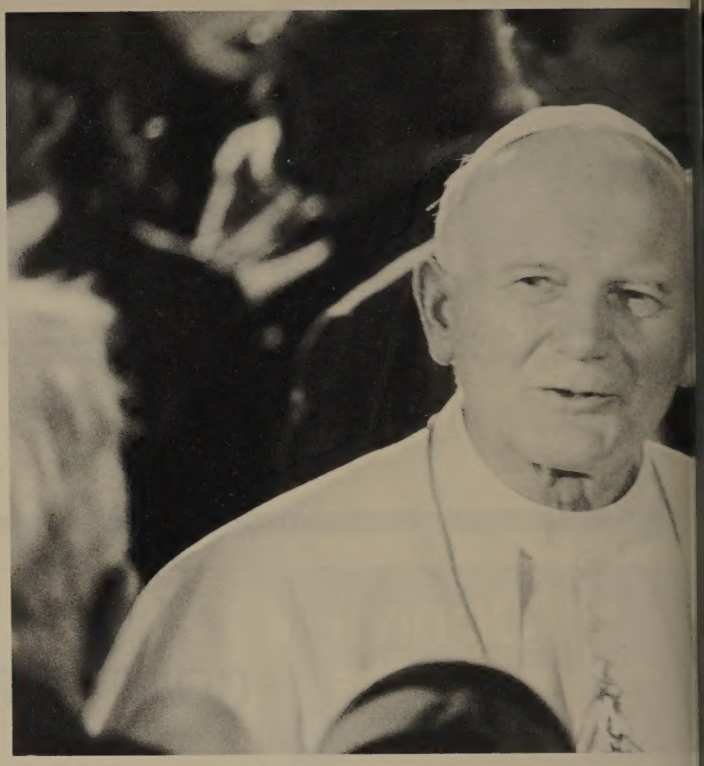


Pilgrim in our Land

by Sharry Silvi

As you read this article the events I describe will be at least a month old. However, as I write today about something that has powerfully touched the lives of many and mine, I know that it will all be as fresh in me as it is today. I hope it will be the same for you.

I followed the Pope almost every step of his trip physically, and everywhere with my life and prayers.

I stood under a banner, I waited in line to enter a crowded stadium or a church, I sipped coffee reading the morning papers in an air conditioned Media room or watched the full coverage of an event I could not attend until my eyes were red from the strain.

I felt spiritually renewed and refreshed in hearing the words of Jesus repeated to the crowds. And I saw them coming to life for me in Phoenix, New Orleans, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Antonio, Columbia and Miami.

It was an experience of unity.

A moment of it for me was in Columbia, South Carolina as I sat with a group of Lutheran ministers, some Catholic nuns, a few Episcopalian priests and others on the lawn in front of the big stage where the ecumenical service was taking place.

Someone spoke of a "longing for unity." And for me, whose life is unity, the desire to see it accomplished was almost painful; yet the hope, that it would not be too far because of what I was seeing, of what I was hearing, was almost tangible. *"We are here together today—the Pope said—as sons and daughters of the one Father, calling upon the one Lord Jesus Christ, in the love which the same Holy Spirit pours forth into our hearts. Let us give thanks to God and rejoice in this fellowship!"*

It was an experience of love, that love of God that heals every wound.

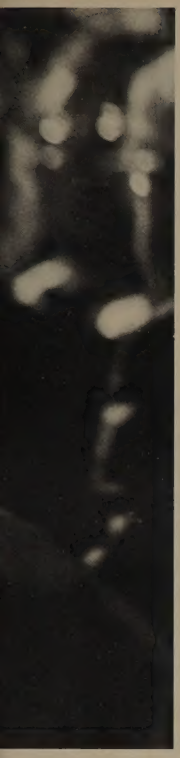
A moment of this was in San Antonio with its jubilant crowds gathered along the streets, in the various services and at the Mass. It came through so powerfully in the Holy Father's words on reconciliation: *"To those who have been far away ... come back to this source of grace; do not be afraid! Christ himself is waiting for you."*

It was an experience of Jesus present in the world today under the countenance of my fellow Americans as I heard the powerful message the Pope delivered in Los Angeles.

"Today Christ is Anglo and Hispanic, Christ is Chinese and Black, Christ is Vietnamese and Irish, Christ is Korean and Italian, Christ is Japanese and Filipino, Christ is Native American, Croatian, Samoan, and many other ethnic groups."

It was an experience of Church as a modern version of the words of Paul echoed in the Pope's words to the assembly of Black Catholic Leadership in New Orleans: "... *there is no black Church, no white Church, no American Church; but there is and must be in the one Church of Jesus Christ a home for blacks, whites, Americans, every culture and race."*

It was an experience of joy, our joy for the Pope's presence among us and his joy to visit



Mary Young

us: "*It is a great joy for me once again to be in your country.... I come as one who already knows you and loves you.... I come as a pilgrim ... as a pastor ... as a friend.*"

It was an experience of truth, of truth and of freedom.

In his address to President Reagan the Pope said: "*The only freedom that can truly satisfy is the freedom to do what we ought as human beings created by God according to his plan. It is the freedom to live the truth of what we are and who we are before God, the truth of our identity as children of God, as brothers and sisters in a common humanity. That is why Jesus Christ linked truth and freedom together, stating solemnly: 'You will know the truth and the truth will set you free' (Jn 8:32).*"

We cannot publish every talk in Living City. I hope, however, that through the excerpts we are going to offer, you may also have this experience of unity, of love, of Church, of Jesus, of joy—this experience of truth. □

Columbia, South Carolina on ecumenism

... In recent decades, especially under the impulse of the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church has placed renewed emphasis on the term "communion" (koinonia) as an especially appropriate way of describing the profound divine and human reality of the Church, the Body of Christ, *the unity of the baptized in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.* Our communion is primarily with the Triune God, but it intimately unites us among ourselves.

This communion is increased in us as we share in the gifts with which Christ has endowed his Church. Some of these are eminently spiritual in nature, such as the life of grace; faith, hope and charity; and other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit (cf. Unitatis Redintegratio, 3). In addition, there are exterior gifts, which include the word of God in Sacred Scripture, Baptism and the other Sacraments, as well as the ministries and charisms which serve ecclesial life.

Although we are not yet in agreement as to how each of our Churches and Ecclesial Communities relates to the fullness of life and mission which flow from God's redemptive act through the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is no small achievement of the ecumenical movement that after centuries of mistrust, we humbly and sincerely *recognize in each other's communities the presence and fruitfulness of Christ's gifts at work.* For this divine action in the lives of all of us we offer thanks to God.

I wish to note in particular the reference made in the opening statement to the sense of spiritual yearning among Christians in this country, a yearning which in part manifests itself in an increasing interest in the life of prayer, in spirituality and in ecumenism. In a word, it is *a yearning for deeper insights into our Christian identity* and, consequently, for *a renewal of our ecclesial life.*►

Cathy Sulak

Hours of waiting ...

Peggy Priel

This important phenomenon can be found to a greater or lesser degree in all Ecclesial Communities, not only in the United States but throughout the world. Surely it is a sign of the action of the Holy Spirit in the people of God. As leaders in our respective Communions, we have the awesome task and privilege of collaborating to ensure that this grace will not be received by us in vain (cf. 2 Cor 6:1).

From the Catholic perspective, a primary factor relating to ecumenical involvement with other Christian bodies has been, from the outset, *the purification and renewal of Catholic life itself.* The Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism indicated: "In the ecumenical work, Catholics must assuredly be concerned for their separated brethren, praying for them, keeping them informed about the Church, making the first approaches toward them. But their primary duty is to make an honest and careful appraisal of whatever needs to be renewed and achieved in the Catholic household itself" (Unitatis Redintegratio, 4).

It is not difficult to see how the internal renewal and purification of the ecclesial life of all of us is essential to any progress we may make toward unity. For *Christ's call to unity is at the same time a call to holiness and a call to greater love.* It is a call for us to render our witness more authentic. Only by becoming more faithful disciples of Jesus Christ can we hope to travel the path of unity under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in the strength of his grace. Only by fully accepting Jesus Christ as the Lord of our lives can we empty ourselves of any negative thinking about each other.

It is important for all of us to realize how much conversion of heart depends on prayer, and how much prayer contributes to unity. The Second Vatican Council spoke about a "*spiritual ecumenism*" which it described as "the soul of the whole ecumenical movement," and which it identified as "a change of heart and holiness of life, coupled with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians" (Unitatis Redintegratio, 8).

In speaking of the priority of internal renewal and prayer in the ecumenical task, I do not intend in any way to minimize other important factors such as our *common Christian service* to those in need or our *common study* carried out in theological dialogues.

Peggy Priel

In the case of *dialogues,* the results reached in them thus far merit the most serious consideration and gratitude from all of us. They tend to increase mutual understanding in ways that have already greatly changed our relationship for the better. Our meeting here today is itself a testimony of this.

Further, these dialogues continue to uncover the deep sources of our common faith and the extent to which that faith, even while we remain apart, is truly shared by our Churches and Ecclesial Communities. In doing so, such exchanges help us *to face our remaining differences in a more intelligible context.* It is the task of dialogue to face these differences and to work toward the time when it will be possible for Christians to confess together the one faith and to celebrate together the one Eucharist.

On the international level, the response of the Catholic Church to the document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry,* which has now been sent to the Commission on Faith and Order, is an effort to contribute to this process directed toward confessing the one faith together. I am convinced that the Lord will give us the light and strength to pursue this course together for the glory of his name.

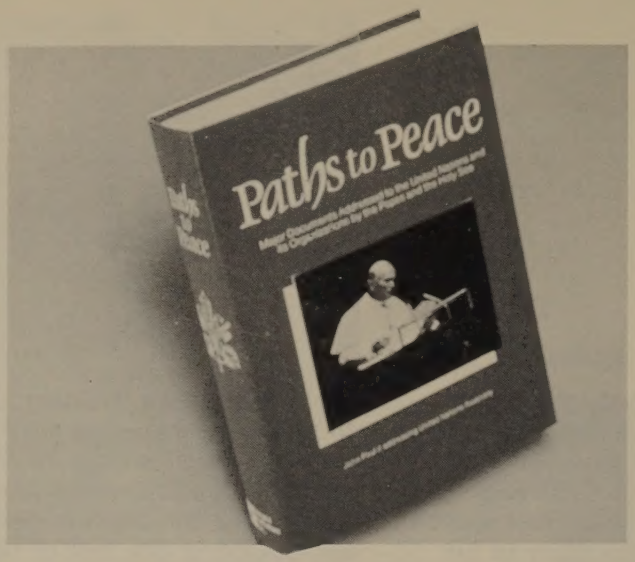
Cathy Sulak

Indispensable as the work of dialogue is, and even though the act of dialogue itself begins to improve relations between us, our ultimate purpose goes beyond the statements and reports of ecumenical commissions. Those statements must be properly evaluated by our respective Churches and Ecclesial Communities in order to determine the level of ecclesial communion that actually exists, so that it may be *properly reflected in the lifestream of ecclesial life.* We must greatly rejoice in discovering the extent to which we are already united, while we respectfully and serenely acknowledge the factors that still divide us.

In regard to *our common service and collaboration,* the statement you have presented puts before all of us important questions. How may we collaborate to promote justice, exercise compassion, search for peace, bring the witness of the Gospel to unbelievers, and manifest our *koinonia?* These issues challenge all of us. Together we must seek to discover the concrete ways in which we may respond in common.

You rightly designate these questions as "points of conversation" among us. As an initial approach, an introduction to our conversation, I would like to make the following brief remarks. First, we are all convinced that the deepest lessons a Christian can learn in this life are learned at the foot of the Cross. When our Churches and Ecclesial Communities address one another and the whole human family, we must do so *from the foot of the Cross of Jesus Christ,* the wellspring of wisdom and the source of our witness. From the Cross we learn the qualities required in our ecumenical search for unity. "For it is from newness of attitudes (cf. Eph 4:23), from self-denial and unstinted love that yearnings for unity take their rise and grow toward maturity" (Unitatis Redintegratio, 7). Ecumenism is not a matter of power and human "tactics". It is *a service of truth in love and humble submission to God.* Similarly, our collaboration in the important areas you list is not a matter of measured calculation. We do not collaborate simply for the sake of efficiency, or for reasons of mere strategy, or for advantage and influence. *We collaborate for the sake of Christ,* who urges us to be one in him and in the Father, so that the world may believe (cf. Jn. 17:21).

The ecumenical community has now welcomed me twice to this country. I in turn have had the joyful opportunity of welcoming many of you to Rome, the city of the Apostles and Martyrs, Peter and Paul. I believe that these and other cordial meetings have the effect, with God's grace, of breaking ►



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down the barriers of misunderstanding that have plagued us for centuries. How often we read in the Scriptures of encounters being occasions of grace, either encounters of the Lord with his disciples, or encounters of the disciples with others to whom they are bringing the word. I believe that in meetings such as these, where two or three or more of us are gathered in his name, *Christ is here in our midst,* asking from each of us a greater depth of commitment to service in his name, and therefore, a greater degree of unity among ourselves. □

St. Mary's Cathedral, Miami on prayer

People always have a great interest in prayer. Like the Apostles, they want *to know how to pray.* The response that Jesus gives is one known to all of us: it is the "Our Father", in which he reveals in a few simple words all the essentials of prayer. The focus is not primarily on ourselves, but on the heavenly Father to whom we commit our lives in faith and trust. Our first concern must be his name, his kingdom, his will. Only then do we ask for our daily bread, for forgiveness, and for deliverance from trials yet to come.

The "Our Father" teaches us that our relationship to God is one of dependence. We are his adopted sons and daughters through Christ. All that we are and all that we have comes from him and is destined to return to him. The "Our Father" also presents prayer to us as an expression of our desires. Beset as we are by human weakness, we naturally ask God for many things. Many times we may be tempted to think that he does not hear or answer us. But as Saint Augustine wisely reminds us, God already knows what we desire even before we ask. He says that prayer is for our benefit, because in praying we "exercise" our desires so that we will grasp what God is preparing to give us. It is an opportunity for us to "widen our hearts"(cf. Letter to Proba, Epistle 30).

In other words, God is always listening to us and answering us—but from the perspective of *a love far greater and a knowledge far deeper* than our own. When it appears that he is not fulfilling our desires by granting the things we ask, however unselfish and noble they may be, in reality he is purifying those desires of ours for the sake of a higher good that often surpasses our understanding in this life. The challenge is to "widen our hearts" by hallowing his name, by seeking his kingdom, and by accepting his will. Like Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane we may sometimes pray either for ourselves or others, "Father, you have the power to do all things. Take this cup away!" But also like Christ we must add, "Not my will but your will be done." □

The Gen 3: A Network that Encircles the Globe

The 2,300 youngsters gathered at Castel Gandolfo showed their readiness to accept the challenges of the third millenium by renewing and witnessing to their commitment to build a united world.

by Fausta Giardina

Just imagine what it would be like if the people of the world one day came together at the same agreed time and, one in heart and mind, prayed to the Father of all.

It sounds like a dream! Yet, thousands of youngsters from every latitude each day for six months stopped what they were doing for a few moments for precisely that purpose. It was the feat of the Gen 3, the boys and girls of the Focolare Movement. This "time-out period" from their daily activities linked youngsters in Asia, for example, as they were about to go to bed with youngsters in North and South America as they were waking, with those of Europe as they were ending their school day. For some it was winter, for others spring and yet others were already on summer vacation. The purpose of a mobilization of such proportions was in preparation for a large scale gathering set for June 6 and 7 at Castel Gandolfo near Rome.

2,300 of them came from all the countries of western Europe from Africa, the Middle East, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, India, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, North and South America. The obstacles they overcame to fulfill this dream, were too many to count. The first big hurdle was how to finance such a trip, but the communion of goods—which is already so much a part of their mentality and life style—made the impossible possible.

It was the first time that such a large and widely international gathering of Gen 3 took place and they dubbed it, the "Super-Congress." They worked very hard to prepare themselves, spiritually and in every way, making their joy in coming together all the more extraordinary. The gathering would have been worth the effort, we thought, if it had served no other purpose than that of bringing so many youngsters of different cultures and nationalities together for the ex- ►

perience of recognizing each other as brothers and sisters.

The goal of a united world comes within reach of these youngsters because it is based on a mentality that has knocked down every barrier. The program continually presented opportunities to get to know each other better. It was the youngsters themselves in fact whom we saw on stage, as Masters of Ceremony, as translators and speakers.

It was primarily the experiences of life that they shared however that made it so clear to all that they are not alone in their committed life style, that their hope is real because their struggle for a united world is going forward on every point of the globe.

The experience shared by a boy named Sao from Portugal had that effect. To begin with, his family was not well off but, after his father was murdered, they lived in even greater financial insecurity and hardship. He dreamed of one day being rich and carefree like his classmates. Then he met a group of Gen 3. "I saw peace, joy and unity in them and among them. They had a richness that came from within. I wanted their kind of richness. That day—he shared—I made the decision to put into practice the words of the Gospel as they did. Now I no longer feel insecure.... There is a beautiful relationship among us Gen: no difference between who is rich and who is poor: we are all equal. Those who have more, give to those who have less and everything is shared."

Another boy, Andre was from Brazil. Someone jokingly called him "the great little entrepreneur." His experience confirmed that the title is well-deserved. Andre has a cousin who, at 25 years of age was leading a very mixed up life and was considered the black sheep of the family. Andre wanted to help him. He had the idea of forming a company to sell peanuts and to involve his cousin in it. He found people to put up the necessary capital to start off with. "First we bought the peanuts, roasted and packaged them and then sold them to stores." Gradually, Andre's words and even more, his life, led his cousin to change his ways. He stopped drinking and coming home late. He became always more punctual and worked all his hours. "Not only but things have been going so well that I was able to pay for most of my expenses in coming here to Rome."

There were many other experiences. One could tell that each day in a thousand different situations these youngsters work at building a united world. Among them it was now a reality. They are now working at extending it to all of humanity. As a symbol of their commitment they built a huge net and all 2,300 participants spread it across the hall with lengths of string passed from hand to hand in symbol of their unity.

Typical of young people of their times they had questions. How can we build unity when our refusal to join our companions in wrongful things cuts us off from them? How can we prevent consumerism and immorality from having a harmful influence on children today? What direction should we take to build peace in the world? Many young people doubt the existence of God. What should we do not to be drawn into the world's mentality? How can we help our friends to respect the Church? These were some of the seven hundred questions that the Gen 3 directed to Chiara Lubich. She, in fact, was the "first Gen," as they say, and since she had carved out this path, they turned to her for the answers. This wasn't the only reason that they awaited her coming, however.

"Miss Chiara" (as the Gen from the Cameroons, Africa call her) is not a teenager as these youngsters are and she lives thousands of miles away from most of them. Nevertheless each of them is linked to her in a very special way by a relationship derived from the fact that they share her same ideal, her life. That explains the thunderous welcome they gave her as she entered the hall. We've all seen teenagers who squeal and scream for movie stars and singers. Here these teenagers expressed their enthusiasm differently: their welcome was explosive and affectionate, lively and delicate all at the same time. Whether they realized it or not teenagers are looking for

role models and when these role models are trustworthy then even the most contrary teenager can be his or her best possible self.

Chiara was welcomed onto the stage and a one to one dialogue began. In answering their questions, Chiara proposed a new vision to them. Does the evil in the world seem to be suffocating the younger generation? Let's do as the early Christians did. Let's not first off tackle the errors but rather let's live our ideal. The first Christians loved one another and people watched them, understood what they should do and changed their ways. This is what we too must do because wherever love reaches, God reaches and all that is good. Through other answers the Gen 3 saw the problems characteristic of their age enlightened by a spiritual experience which made them feel like precious instruments in a divine plan. Once again they recognized themselves as protagonists of a physical and spiritual growth on a path directed toward the highest human and divine goals not less than those of the very often slower adults! Chiara had once again enkindled in the hearts of these young people a passion for that goal which is sanctity.

There is a new factor in this goal, though. The commitment to live the Gospel with totality that these young people welcome with extraordinary generosity contains a thrust toward sanctity, but a thrust which has a collective dimension, that makes you believe that it is possible to be a generation of saints for the society of our century.

Seeing them leads me to think of the horizons opening up then for the laity of tomorrow. The prospects loom all the larger if we think that this "new generation" aims so clearly to reach out to all the young people of the world to offer, with humility and enthusiasm, their great ideal and a clean "breath of fresh air."

The Gen 3 involve their contemporaries in various local and international projects through a movement they lead called "The Young for Unity Movement." With the Young for Unity in mind, the Gen 3 set a new goal for themselves on June 6. They made a resolution to build an international center at Loppiano, the first of the permanent Mariapolises,[1] so that young people from every continent could come and see a united world in miniature already accomplished. It would be a step forward in making that "net" extend and pass from hand to hand to the youth of all races and nations.

by Fausta Giardina

1) The mini-cities being built around the world by the Focolare Movement which bear witness to the fact that the unity Jesus prayed for is possible.

Questions and Answers with Chiara

Question: I am Margaret from the United States. Dear Chiara since tomorrow is Pentecost Sunday could you tell us who the Holy Spirit is for you?

Chiara: The Holy Spirit is for me what he is for the Church, that is, the third Divine Person. We know that God is One, however he is in a mysterious way also three. The third Divine Person is precisely the Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophets. Then he was present at the birth of baby Jesus. It was he who caused the Incarnation. He was present when Jesus began his public life. Jesus promised him to his apostles and, in fact, the Holy Spirit came into the Cenacle when the Apostles were gathered there with Mary.

The Holy Spirit is especially present in the pope and bishops, and in particular gifts of his which are called charisms. When certain movements sprang up in the Church like at the time of St. Francis, St. Benedict and others, it was the Holy Spirit that brought them about.

Who is the Holy Spirit for me? The Holy Spirit is the one who gave me the Ideal[1], because the Ideal is really a gift of his, or better, it is he himself who works in it. So I have a very close relationship with the Holy Spirit, but all of you do too because the Ideal has been given to all of you. Always remember that the Ideal was given to you by the Holy Spirit and then with me you will have great gratitude to him. So tomorrow is Pentecost, the feast day of the Holy Spirit, our patron, the one who protects the entire Work of Mary and especially the Gen 3."

Question: I am Josephine from Fontem, Africa. Can you tell us Chiara, how you strive toward sanctity each day?

Chiara: Early each morning I do meditation or as you would

say, I "go in depth" in what is my union with Jesus and Mary. When I meditate I choose a word or a sentence to remember during the day. Usually I choose the one I then share with you in our telephone conference call.

It could be, for example, "to improve in the present moment, " or "to take the initiative in loving," or "to do the will of God with heroism." Now, after our last conference call I chose the phrase, "to live as the mother of everyone" as all of you have learned to do, to be the mothers and fathers of all those you meet. I try to live just one phrase a day and with it I strive toward sanctity.

Question: I am Joseph from Australia. Chiara you have said that we Gen 3 are a generation of saints. Do you think that everyone has the vocation to reach sanctity?

Chiara: I have said and also written that the Gen 3 are a generation of saints, that is, they ought to become a generation of saints, and now you ask if all the people in the world have the vocation to become saints.

My answer is that everyone has the vocation to sanctity. However, often or rather most of the time, people are not able to fulfill that vocation because they don't know how. When I was more or less your age, perhaps a little older, I didn't know how to strive toward sanctity either. I used to tell myself: if you have to fast all day in order to become a saint, let's fast; if you have to pray all day in order to become a saint, let's pray; if you have to do penance all day in order to become a saint, let's do penance. But I didn't know what to do in order to become a saint. I felt as if a high wall was separating me from sanctity, from the way of reaching sanctity.

One day, the desire to become a saint was so strong that I thought: "I'll leave everything, give up everything and go into a convent. Not only but I'll enter the strictest cloister and no one will see me anymore."

But I was told that since the Movement had already started around me I couldn't abandon all the focolarine. So I understood that I didn't necessarily have to enter a convent in order to become a saint but rather I had to do the will of God. I understood that I could reach sanctity by living the will of God moment by moment and that this was a way that would be good for everyone: for mothers, fathers, professors, students, blue and white collar workers, politicians, kings, everyone.

Today as well many people don't know how to reach sanctity and even say that to live a spiritual life and be immersed in the world are two contradictory things. Well, then, if we show them how, they too will understand that to reach sanctity all they have to do is the will of God where they are: within the family, in the office, at school, in a house of Congress, etc.

And so, there is opening up a new way to reach sanctity also through this discovery made by the Movement. □

1) Refers to the spirituality of the Movement.

Religions for Peace

In the spirit of the 1986 World Day of Prayer for Peace at Assisi where for the first time in history the leaders of the world's religions met together to pray for peace, religious representatives met again on August 3 and 4 in Kyoto, Japan.

by Giuseppe Garagnani

The first evening was dedicated to opening talks delivered in an atmosphere of great joy, the joy of coming together again less than a year after Assisi.

Early on August 4th, the Catholics met together in a parish of Kyoto for a liturgical celebration. Cardinal Arinze, president of the Secretariat for non-Christians arrived at this Summit of religions to represent the Pope. The Catholic Church in Japan was represented by Archbishop Shirayanagi of Tokyo and Bishop Tanaka of Kyoto.

Franciscan Friars from Assisi had come to underline the continuity with that meeting. Also, representatives of the community of Saint Egidio in Rome came to read their message. There were other young participants whom we know very well—the Young for Unity. As varied a group as these young people were—in nationality and religion—they were not atypical considering the universal representation of the gathering. Nevertheless, how such a varied group could come together was a source of interest and curiosity.

The Young for Unity brought their message for the religious leaders and stacks and stacks of papers containing the 146,000 signatures they had collected from young people all over the world who wanted to commit themselves to living and working for peace. The presentation was made during the morning gathering at Takaragaike (which literally means "The treasure of the lake") after the delegations read their appeals for peace.

The Buddhists hosted the meeting for a number of reasons. First of all here on Mount Hiei they are celebrating 1200 years of their protomonastery

excerpts from the Message of the Pope to the Leaders in Kyoto

"... Today people of every religious belief are becoming always more conscious of the fact that peace is a gift of God and that we must ask him united in prayer.

A war can break out because of just a few persons but peace requires the unanimous commitment of all. If we will all raise our hearts and voices to God in the name of peace and universal brotherhood, God cannot not hear us. Let us recall on these occasions that peace also requires the efforts of everyone to bring about those humane living conditions that make real harmony possible."

in Japan. The other reason is that it was Venerable Etai Yamada, head of the Tendai sect, to propose at Assisi the time and place for this second gathering of religions for peace. Nikkyo Niwano, honorary president of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, and founder of the Rissho Kosei Kai, a lay Buddhist Movement we have mentioned on other occasions in our magazine, opened the encounter. It was in the afternoon however that the more markedly religious manifestations took place.

There we were on the mountain sacred to Japanese Buddhists as it loomed majestically between the valley of Kyoto and the great Lake Biwako. Nature here is beautiful and intact, the guardian and source of the profound laws of harmony so dear to Japan.

But here the whole world was present. There were people of all races and cultures and of every religious persuasion coming together as a people who call God by different names but today invoke him pleading for peace for the world. Before 2,000 invited guests this varied group of religious leaders passed in procession. Besides Catholics there were representatives of the Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant Churches; there were Buddhists of the different currents and schools (Theravada from Sri Lanka and Thailand, Mahayana from China and Korea, the Tendai and Shingon sects from Japan); there were Jews, there were Hindus and Sikhs from India, Shintoists, Confucianists, ►

After each delegation gave their invocation for peace the representatives of the Young for Unity presented their message with the 146,000 signatures from all over the world to the religious leaders. Here Venerable Yamada, official host of the gathering, gives a gift to the Gen in return.

The Young for Unity Were There

Eleven Gen 3 represented the Young for Unity Movement at Kyoto. The group was composed of two girls from England, a Korean, a Filipino, two boys from Macao, two young people from Hong Kong, and three from Japan. They were Christians of different churches, Buddhists and Taoists between 13 and 16 years of age. The message that they presented to the religious leaders spoke of the hope the Assisi day of prayer was for them and thanked the leaders for the witness of unity they gave the world. They said the idea that links the Young for Unity throughout the world is the commitment to live for a united world and their determination to accept the challenge for peace that the future has in store.

In collecting these 146,000 signatures in 47 countries the Young for Unity had many opportunities at school and in their neighborhoods to involve other young people in working to build the civilization of love.

At their super-congress in June the Gen presented the signatures to Cardinal Arinze who called the Gen "the future of humanity."

NEWS OF THE MARIAPOLIS

First Notice of Dates

Vacation Mariapolis
from July 23 after supper
to August 7 after breakfast
at Mariapolis Luminosa
Hyde Park, NY

Southwest Mariapolis
from July 10 after supper
to July 16 after breakfast
at New Mexico State University
Las Cruces, New Mexico

Midwest Mariapolis
from August 9 after supper
to August 14 after breakfast
at Hope College
Holland, Michigan

For further information contact
the Focolare Center nearest you
(see inside back cover for addresses)

Jainists, Amer-Indians, representatives of the new religions of Japan and many others who all entered in procession.

After the great bell of Mount Hiei, fused in gold, copper and bronze was struck by an enormous trunk of bamboo sounding 28 solemn rings, each delegation came forward to raise their own invocation for peace to heaven in word or song.

The Young for Unity also raised their voices and gave their precious stacks of signatures with their message to the religious leaders. Yamada embraced them, visibly touched.

A joint declaration was then read which said among other things:

"Peace does not mean only the absence of war; rather it is a state of fraternal concord and the achievement of the unity of our entire human family.... Peace cannot exist without justice and love. The desire for peace, therefore, must be pursued by the faithful of all religions. To pray for peace means also to work for it, and even to suffer for it. Service and sacrifice for this cause take on different forms and methods. Just as in working for solutions to conflicts, disarmament, conservation of the environment, human rights, aid to refugees and the transformation of unjust social systems, men and women of religion will have to activate a preferential option for the poor."

The leaders then turned to one another for a warm exchange of a handshake or an embrace of peace. This moving scene closed the program.

During the press conference that followed, the journalists pressed for concrete results and made reference to the initiatives mentioned in the appeal. They brought up the difficult and at times seemingly hopeless situations of war and tension in the world. No one can deny that the problems are real and pressing. Many are of a planetary dimension. We cannot illude ourselves into thinking we can resolve them with declaration upon declaration. Everyone was very much aware of this.

The feedback and response to what had been accomplished, however, was very positive and we share that impression. One thing is certain: the will was strong to continue these gatherings. They are a unique opportunity to grow in knowledge and respect for one another, to deepen and solidify relationships without falling into any syncretism. The fact that there is not unity in faith cannot be an obstacle to unity of intent. Moreover, these occasions lay the groundwork for other areas of collaboration in the common effort to give glory to God by serving humanity.

Two days later many of the participants met again at Hiroshima to commemorate the 42nd anniversary of that nuclear holocaust and to confirm the commitment to peace made at Assisi and renewed at Kyoto in the hope that it will one day soon become the commitment of all. □

THE INTERNATIONAL DEBT CRISIS

Twenty years after "Populorum Progressio" at the approach of the year 2000, the civilization of selfishness has mined the world with a series of explosive situations each of which is capable of compromising the future of humanity.

The handling of third world debts is an urgent bomb to defuse. The Catholic Church, through a document entitled: "An Ethical Approach to the International Debt Question" issued by the Pontifical Justice and Peace Commission, invites politicians and financial experts who make the decisions determining the fate of the world to take the courage to re-evaluate our economic principles and find new foundations for international economic relations.

It is not easy to determine just who brought on the debt problem. Some blame the domestic policies of the 124 debtor countries of the third world, others blame the International Monetary Fund and large banks for pushing funds on reluctant borrower nations; others fault the industrialized countries, particularly the United States, for bringing a downturn in international trade and a dramatic increase in interest rates, the real detonators of the crisis. All three explanations are partially correct but the bottom line is that the problem now exists, is lasting and affects lenders and borrowers alike.[1]

But how did the problem begin?

According to the Vatican Justice and Peace Commission in its document on the subject: "widely shared opinions about growth possibilities led developing countries to look for capital and commercial banks to offer credit for financial investments, sometimes at high risks. Because prices for their raw materials were high, the majority of debtor nations remained solvent."[2] But after the first oil crisis in 1973 their debts and interest payments began to rise and get out of control.

As the OPEC nations sought profitable investments for their petrodollars in Swiss, London and American banks, the larger world financial institutions raced to offer emerging nations money for ambitious development projects like dams, highways, railroads, iron and steal foundries, petrochemical and nuclear plants. Many heads of third world governments not only approved these huge construction projects but also bought increasingly sophisticated military hardware. Since the prices for their raw material exports were on the increase these countries were confident that they could repay the loans.

However, within a few short years, the industrialized nations were able to reduce their dependence on expensive raw materials. As a result, third world countries found themselves trapped into buying increasingly costly arms and high technology products while the prices of the export commodities on which their economies were based, fell. The global recession in 1979 exacerbated their situation. ►

These circumstances have now led to the vicious circle in which debtor countries find themselves. "In order to pay back their debts, they are obliged to transfer increasing amounts of money outside the country. These are resources which should be available for internal purposes and investment for their own development."[3]

Sizing the Problem

Currently the foreign debt of third world countries is estimated to be one trillion dollars with the major debtors being Latin American nations. Brazil alone has a foreign debt of 107 billion dollars, the highest in the third world.

In August 1982 Mexico notified its creditors that it was out of money and would have to reschedule its loans. Equador suspended all payments after its petroleum exports were blocked by a disastrous earthquake. In February, 1987 Brazil declared a moratorium on interest payments.

The document cited above states, "Debt servicing cannot be met at the price of the asphyxiation of a country's economy, and no government can morally demand of its people privations incompatible with human dignity."[4]

The tendency is for credit agencies to view the problem only from a monetary point of view and therefore impose terms on the debtor countries that contribute to unemployment, recession and a drastic reduction in the standard of living for their people. Those who suffer the most are the poor.

The poorest countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa which are least developed, most afflicted by hunger and malnutrition and most vulnerable to commodity price declines, are in extremely perilous circumstances. Although their aggregate debt of more than 100 billion dollars is about one-quarter that of Latin America, their collateral (oil, minerals, manufactures, grain, etc.) is much less adequate, their ability to repay their foreign debt much weaker and the possibility of their rescheduling it very small according to a study by the U.S. bishops. The world leaders meeting at the Venice Economic Summit in June were alarmed enough by the debt problem to consider it "a threat to the political stability of democratic countries."

These debts would, in turn, threaten the financial well being of their creditors if the countries should default. The situation is so complex that no country can consider itself secure and invulnerable to the situation or ignore the urgency of the problem hoping that someone else will take care of it or that it will go away on its own.

Recently Citicorp, the largest U.S. bank, took stiff measures to defend itself against potential losses on loans to developing countries. Banks have come to realize that lending more and more money so that countries can continue to meet the interest payments on old loans will not solve the crisis. In fact, Citicorp has placed 3 billion dollars in cash reserves (taking a billion dollar loss) in view of the 15 billion dollars it has loaned to developing countries. Banks are accepting the fact that much of the principle "will never be repaid and must be written off."[5]

> *"The time is over when (the industrialized countries) can act without regard for the effects of their own policies on other countries."*
>
> *"An Ethical Approach to the Int'l Debt Question"*

Proposals for Action

Twenty years ago the encyclical Populorum Progressio (On the Progress of Peoples) pointed out the need to correct some of the mechanisms that regulated the international economy. Today's enormous tumor of billions of dollars in debts represents, in a sense, the result of that message gone unheeded. Last year, Pope John Paul II asked the Justice and Peace Commission to study the problem and propose some criteria for weighing the situation and a method of analysis "for an ethical approach to the international debt question." The commission is composed of eminent economists whose thinking reflects the Catholic culture today. Their document, entitled "An Ethical Approach to the International Debt Question" was released on January 27, 1987.

The document reaffirms ethical principles (supported by technical evidence) and takes a courageous stand, too important to miss.

While exhorting creditor and debtor countries, financial agencies and commercial banks to recognize their responsibilities for the world's future, the document affirms that economic structures ought to be at the service of the human person and not vice versa. International financial relationships must be reformed "before shortsightedness and egoisms—be they private or collective—degenerate into irremediable conflicts."[6]

The international press paid little attention to the document and misrepresented an important point by saying that the document authorized debtor nations to renege on past debts. In fact, however, the document supports the rights of the creditors to be repaid "except when loans have been granted at usurious rates or used to finance projects overpriced through fraudulent complicity."[7]

Under this second category are those loans made by governments with the provision to sell military weapons or to build installations which serve to further military aggression.

About one-fifth of Brazil's debt was incurred to build a nuclear reactor (which has never been finished) even though Brazil has great resources for hydroelectric energy. Nuclear power, however, is necessary to produce plutonium, which would have enabled Brazil (under the generals in power at the time) to enter the sad club of countries capable of devastating humanity.

The document points out that the whole debt issue needs to be viewed in a broader context which takes into consideration how increasingly interdependent countries and their economies have become and how essential international collaboration is in working for the common good.

"Solidarity," it says, "implies an awareness and acceptance of co-responsibility for the causes and solutions relative to international debt."[8]

Very specific recommendations are given to all parties involved and strong statements like the following are made: "The time is over when the industrialized countries can act without regard for the effects of their policies on other countries."[9] And again: "The industrialized countries have to do away with the protectionist measures which hinder exports from the developing countries."[10]

To the debtor nations the document has this to say: "The leaders of a country bear the responsibility for monitoring their foreign-debt level in order to avoid having to cope suddenly with an extreme situation that arises because of shortsightedness."[11]

The Commission launches a clear final appeal to all people of good will to "broaden their conscience to include these new, urgent and complex international responsibilities and to mobilize the full range of their possibilities for action in order to identify and implement solutions of solidarity."[12]

The proposal then cites the miraculous results wrought by the Marshall Plan after World War II to remind the industrialized countries that such a ►

precedent exists and could be repeated now on behalf of the developing countries in order to restore hope to their suffering populations.

All lay persons are invited to explore new methods courageously, and to question economic principles heretofore considered sacrosanct even if it means running the risk of derision. Great is the need to examine the validity and universality of the concepts on which our economic vision is based, for example, free competition, and our methods for setting market prices.

Even the three dimensional physics of Galileo and Newton were considered sacrosanct and untouchable until Einstein came along with a fourth dimension, time, and formulated the theory of relativity. Einstein's theory was a continuation of what physics had demonstrated up to then as well as a demonstration of things that physics had not as yet foreseen.

Economics is a complex science because it involves human behavior. An Einstein would be needed to discover laws that would introduce a new dimension, a dimension of solidarity and by so doing help us to emerge from the failures of our present system. Or perhaps instead of one genius, many economists, politicians, and entrepreneurs are needed to respond to the challenge to draw up new modes of interaction among peoples.

by Alberto Ferrucci
with Joseph Klock
and Phyllis Scaringe

1) Norberto Gonzalez, Division for Economic and Social Information, Dep't. of Public Information, "The Debt Crisis", August 1987; 2) Pontifical Justice and Peace Commission, "An Ethical Approach to the Int'l Debt Question," Presentation, Jan. 27, 1987; 3) ibid.; 4) ibid.; 5) U.S. News and World Report, "How to Take a $ 1 Billion Loss and Look Good," p. 46, June 1, 1987; 6) op. cit. "An Ethical Approach ..., presentation; 7) ibid. n. 3; 8) ibid. introduction n. 2; 9) ibid. part III n.1; 10) ibid. part II; 11) ibid. final proposal.

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From the Introduction,
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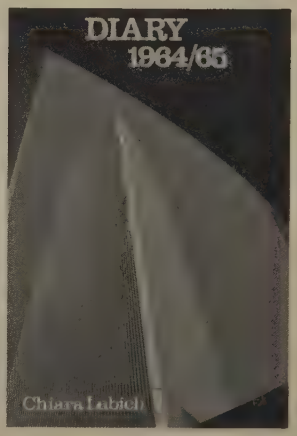

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MARIO'S RACE

"How can I,
a tiny grain of sand
in a huge desert,
already live the goal
I am to one day reach
when
God wills it?"

by Gabriele Marsili

Someone may have heard of Mario and Pina Capelli: press and television have made their story known. The fact is that there was a time when Mario and Pina were not considered a happy, well-matched couple.

Both come from a small town near Rome (where Mario was born on August 11, 1944), were married in 1968, and had two daughters, Monica and Patrizia. Mario's work for a bank took him first to Milan, and then with the family to Terracina, also near Rome.

After the first happy years of marriage, the relationship between the two began to deteriorate. Mario would later tell how he had become addicted to playing cards using all kinds of futile pretexts to stay out late at night, and how irritable and domineering he had become at home. A total break-up appeared inevitable.

But in 1977 Pina came to know the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. She discovered God as Love and charity towards all, even towards those who are contrary to us. She realized that she could even love her husband in a new way, without getting into arguments; arguments only drove them further apart.

Mario was surprised and intrigued by his wife's new behavior. He didn't know what to make of it, and wanted to know the reason. This was how he, too, came to know the Focolare and, after the first impact, something began to happen. The experiences of others were a light to him. He resolved to live this spirit of love, and with his family to bring it to many others in Terracina and to his own work environment. His colleagues, in fact, recognized his change which was evident not so much from what Mario said, as from what he did. He was a man of few words, often even shy, but with a touch of wisdom. His behavior was marked by simple dedication to duty, with a readiness to listen to anyone whatever their position. He made himself one, sharing both the difficult and the happy circumstances of those near him, trying to be helpful as best he could.

As time went by, he felt that God was perhaps calling him to a new commitment. He knew the story of Igino Giordani who, together with Chiara Lubich, had opened a new way in the Church also for married persons. Mario generously set out on this road and found in the focolare—this original vocation shared by both married and single persons—a life-giving source for growing and maturing in love.

Mario was to live in this disposition of loving others to the very end, even when repeatedly struck down by illness.

In early January of this year he suddenly realized that he could not see from his right eye. A specialist had him hospitalized immediately.

While awaiting a bed in the eye unit, Mario was assigned to a huge ward of elderly patients. Throughout the night a little old man continued to moan and complain that no one paid attention to him. Mario repeatedly got up from bed to calm him. By so doing, at least the other patients were able to sleep.

Several days after the first operation on his brain (a benign frontal tumor, fifteen to twenty years old, soft but enormous which besides corroding the optic nerve had damaged some ►

small and large arteries), Mario suffered a life-threatening hemorrhage which he somehow managed to survive. When I went to see him I expected to hear all about what he'd been through. To my great amazement he asked me "How is Alain's little girl?" He had remembered the baby of a close friend of ours who at the time had serious growth problems.

Already a year ago, at a meeting in Rocca di Papa, something new had happened to Mario. As he told us later, he felt a push from within to offer his life for unity, the unity Jesus had asked of the Father after the last supper. At that time Mario couldn't have known about his illness. Evidently, God was preparing him. He also knew very well the secret, the means for achieving unity: Jesus, who had willed to love us through suffering, touched the very limit of it when on the cross he felt the Father's absence.

Within our limits, we can return that love by recognizing him, the Forsaken One, in our own—and in others—big and small sufferings. Mario poignantly described this experience in various letters. A few sentences are enough to communicate his state of mind in those moments.

January 29.

"... I recalled that 1987 should be the holiest year for us, and it is not by chance that the Pope dedicated it to Mary.

"How can I, a tiny grain of sand in a huge desert already live the goal I am to reach whenever God wills it? By loving, loving, loving, with a love that does not come from me alone but from the unity with all of you.... Only then will I be able to love others not with a personal love which is only human, but with a unitary love, the fruit of Jesus in me and among us; it is no longer a love that is mine, but of God.

The Capelli family all together. Mario, his daughters Patrizia and Monica, and his wife, Pina. Mario amazed his doctors and fellow patients with his peace and serenity on the eve of surgery. "If this is to be my last day," he had said, "let it be the most beautiful."

"... The only key to resolve everything in this world is Jesus Forsaken; loving him unconditionally. Only this brings the Risen Lord into our heart. This is what I'm experiencing these days."

January 30.

"I gave some thought to these moments that pass: I have excellent surgeons, the operation is not perhaps terribly risky, but then I felt that I shouldn't hold into these reassurances. I must live every moment as though it were the last...."

Meditating on the Psalm: "The Lord is the defense of my life, whom shall I fear? He gives me refuge on the day of misfortune," Mario wrote: "How true these words are, how great his love for me, he immediately transforms suffering into joy, the worries disappear.... I shouldn't say 'disappear' because, the moment I totally lose myself in him, the worries acquire a deeper, or rather a higher, divine meaning. This is the refuge he gives me when I accept misfortune as a springboard.

January 31.

"I was about to start meditation this morning when the surgeon came in to tell me that I'll be operated on Tuesday, February 3rd at 8:30....

"In a second, a rush of thoughts filled my mind, and for a moment I felt lost.... But right away I said a "Glory be"[1] and then I recalled the evangelical counsels. I paused at the meaning of chastity: to be detached from everything that is not God, so that we may be ourselves: an image of his on earth. I don't know why, Mary Desolate came to mind, as she had stood at the foot of the Cross; the most complete, most perfectly fulfilled image of chastity.

February 1.

"...Everything that happens to me, whether joyous or painful, is his personal love directed towards me and for me alone. This morning too, I woke up with an immense joy, a joy that has no human explanation, that comes from within...."

February 2.

"This morning I tried to meditate. I was waiting to feel something, to find God's presence, but there was nothing: I felt empty. This, too, was him, however; it was Jesus Forsaken. This is what I must live today: emptiness, feeling forsaken ... in so important a moment of my life. The emptiness is him, the Forsaken One, who never forsakes me. This thought alone filled my day. And then you came to see me...."

"Now, before going to sleep I direct a word of thanks to the Eternal Father who sent me this trial. I feel renewed in my soul the way he wants me to be, a fruit of his abandonment...."

In another letter, also of February 2nd: "During these days I passed through times in which I asked that this chalice be taken away from me, but with the strength and the help of Mary (I have always turned to her), I immediately added "Your will be done." And tonight I say: 'Into your hands I commit my spirit'."

Between February 3rd, the day of the operation, and March 2nd, Mario's condition was unstable. Those close to him lived the hopes and the anguish of every hour. Complications arose but Mario didn't give up. Even though he was sorely tested he refused to become wrapped up in himself. He was always in the attitude of thinking of others: his wife, his daughters, but he didn't stop there. He continously reached out to all and everyone. Those who went to see him found a holocaust that offered continual spiritual strength.

On March 2nd, Mario went into a coma. The physicians wanted to try a second operation to extract a large hematoma caused by another cerebral hemorrhage. Hope was waning. Early in the afternoon, as though wishing to spiritually accompany Mario into the operating room, a small group of us, Pina, a priest friend of ours, and a few others went to attend Mass at the university chapel.

All of us, especially Pina, were beset by grief and by fear. Slowly, however, at the reading of the Scriptures, a deep peace entered our souls: we all shared what we felt in that moment. Something impossible to express bound us to one another and to Mario who, we felt was present. And on that altar Pina found the courage to offer her husband to God. Like Mary at the foot of the cross, she felt strong enough to accept this detachment. And, strangely, a great serenity came over her.

Mario never came out of the coma which lasted fourteen days. And yet, whoever came to his bedside during that period did not feel as though Mario was absent. This impression lasted to the very end.

In an old notebook of his, we later discovered these lines: "When I leave ... the bells should ring in celebration rather than mourning. There should be songs of joy because I will at last have reached the goal every Christian aims at."

□

1) refers to the prayer: "Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit...."

WORD OF LIFE

"To everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but anyone who has not will be deprived even of what he has" (Mt 25:29).

"To everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but anyone who has not will be deprived even of what he has."

These words conclude the parable of the talents. A man who was leaving on a journey called in his servants and entrusted his funds to them. To one he gave five thousand silver pieces, to another two thousand, and to another one thousand: each according to his ability. During the master's absence, the first two invested the money they had received, doubling it. The third, however, out of laziness and fear, buried the money in the ground to keep it safe. Upon his return, the master praised the first two and gave them more important positions. He took away instead the money he had given to the third one and dismissed him.

"To everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but anyone who has not will be deprived even of what he has."

It is not hard to understand the lesson Jesus wants to give us through this parable. The talents stand for the inestimable treasure of the Word that Jesus came to proclaim and for which he will ask an account at the end of our lives. The Gospels show us how the proclamation of the Word is at the center of all the desires and activities of Jesus.

We see him going from village to village, through the streets, the squares, the countryside, to homes and synagogues, proclaiming the message of salvation to all, but especially to the poor, the lowly, the outcasts.

He compares his Word to light, to salt, to yeast, to a net lowered into the sea, to a seed sown in a field; and he will give his life so that the fire that the Word contains might spread.

"To everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but anyone who has not will be deprived even of what he has."

One thing is beyond doubt: Jesus expects the Word he has proclaimed to transform the world. As a result, Jesus does not accept that anyone remain neutral, luke-warm or indifferent in the face of this proclamation. He does not allow such a great gift to remain inactive once it has been received.

To underscore his expectation, Jesus reaffirms here a law of his which lies at the foundation of all spiritual life: if one puts his Word into practice, Jesus will lead that person always more deeply into the wealth and incomparable joys of his kingdom. Conversely, if a person neglects to live the Word, Jesus will take it away and give it to others so that it bear fruit.

"To everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but anyone who has not will be deprived even of what he has."

This Word of life puts us on our guard against a serious omission into which we too can fall: to receive the Gospel, perhaps even study it, admire it, and discuss it, but not put it into practice. Then we act like that servant in the parable who lacked the courage to risk.

Instead Jesus expects us to "invest" the Word, to make it become life of our life, a force that shapes all our actions. Hence through our witness, the Word will be the light, salt and leaven capable of gradually transforming society.

This month therefore let us take one of the many phrases of the Gospel and put it into practice.

Chiara Lubich

EXPERIENCES

The following are experiences in living the Gospel which some of our readers shared with us.

Behind the events

Friends of the family phoned to tell us about their son, Sam, who was leaving home to find work. They confided some of the different tragedies that had hit their family and of Sam's efforts to put his life back together. My wife, Becky, and I decided that, if he moved to our city, we would open our home to him until he could get back on his feet. One night, in fact, we did open the front door to find Sam. We also found his friend, Mark. Sam and Mark both moved in. Opportunities to love were innumerable. For example, every night they would want to watch different kinds of TV programs than we did. Since our children are ages seven, five and two, we didn't necessarily want them to see the sort of programs they liked. My first thought was, "This is *my* house, *my* TV, They can watch what we want to watch."

Instead, we diverted the kids to their bedrooms, and began reading them stories. This experience repeated itself whenever Sam and Mark did not go out on the town. In the meantime, we just kept trying to love them in little but constant ways.

As time went on, we noticed that our relationship with them was growing. They would get on the floor and play with all the kids. We noticed too that they stopped going out at night in order to be home with us. Mark, in particular, began to trust us.

After a few weeks, they both found work and moved into an apartment, but often they would come by.

One night Mark came to look for Sam his friend who was at our house doing his laundry. He wanted to borrow some cash and he was in a great deal of pain. He wanted to go to the emergency clinic. When Sam didn't offer to take him I did, but he insisted that he could drive himself. At that point I looked at Becky and we both knew that this was Jesus at our doorstep, and that I should go with him. Since he refused to let me drive him, I got in the car and followed him as soon as he left and turned the corner.

When Mark saw me walk into the emergency clinic a real look of peace came over his face even though he persisted in telling me I needn't have come. He was very ill and tests ran late into the night. More than once he sent nurses out with messages telling me to go home because he would still be there for a while. He even got up from the examination table to come out and tell me to leave.

Finally, well into the night, the hospital staff began turning off the lights in the waiting room, and locking the front doors. Everyone was going home except the doctors treating Mark. Sitting there in the dark, I thought: "This is ridiculous. Here I am, sitting in the dark. Why don't I go home?" I knew that there was nothing I could do for Mark healthwise. The only reason to stay was for him. The thought kept coming back: "This is my brother and if I am going to love Jesus in him, I am going to have to stay."

Some time later the doctors released Mark and gave him pain medication. When we went out to the parking lot we found Sam sitting in his car. He, too, had been waiting quite a while but was not able to go inside because the doors were locked. I looked at Mark's face and saw that he was really moved. He couldn't believe that Sam, too, had come.

The next Sunday evening we were expecting them for dinner, but Mark arrived more than an hour late. When Sam asked him where he had been, he answered that he had not been to Mass in ten years and he had decided it was time to go. Sam was really taken aback. When he caught his breath he said, "Well, how did you know where to go?" Mark replied, "I looked in the Yellow Pages and found a church."

A few weeks later Mark left the city and we began seeing Sam at church every Sunday; it's becoming a regular occurrence.

E.U.

LOVE IS STRONGER

by Matteo Silvan

A new life

Part VII

Lazarus Come Out, *a book published by New City Press is the autobiography of Matteo Silvan.*

Love is Stronger *starts where the other ended, with the death of his wife Teresa and with the beginning of a new chapter in his life. Up to this point, Matteo has recounted his dramatic spiritual journey. At fifty years of age, a family man at the peak of his career in government service, he nevertheless experienced a void in his life. One day he stopped to talk to two young women from the Focolare who came to visit his daughter. From here his journey took a decisive turn. In the Mariapolis he went into a crisis: he was too busy for God and yet His call was irresistable. We resume our story now after Matteo has gone to live in a focolare community.*

To Write a Book ...

The free time I enjoyed during my first months in the focolare gave me the opportunity to review in peace the blueprints of "Lazarus Come Out," the book at which I had worked for so long.

I could not think without a twinge of pain that Teresa would not see it. I had thought of dedicating it to her to make her happy that it was finished. I had worked hard, you could say I had suffered the birth pains but she had suffered even more to see me work relentlessly for months, anxious and fearful, yet ready to accept even the failure of my attempt. This was the background, but I wanted to do all I could so that the book would be a gift of simplicity and clarity. In order to reach this goal, I even gave the blueprints to my grandson Francesco, then 13 years of age, to read. I asked him to mark all that was unclear to him. Following his advice almost always I was able to express what I wanted with simpler phrases.

However, for those who are not writers by profession (as is my case) simplicity and clarity are not readily attained in the first or second draft. For this reason I did not want to relent in the effort of writing, rewriting and correcting everything until every written word might express the deep meaning of what in each one of us longs to be shared. Within us there is an impenetrable abyss; each of us is a mystery unto him or her self.

To write and rewrite, that I could do, but that would not be enough. I also needed to find an editor who would take the risk of publishing it. This I knew would not be easy for me since I was totally foreign to the literary world. My first entry into that world ended in failure. During the month of June 1975 I wrote to an old friend of mine, Fulvio Tomizza, who had recently become famous among Italian writers. Through him my manuscript reached the desk of the biggest editor in Italy. A provisional title which I later changed was "A Rag in God's Hands." In 1976, the editor wrote back that the book was an authentic testimony of a believer and noble writer, however, he feared there would be no market for it. It was a difficult moment. Publication had to be subordinated to budgetary concerns. Clearly the editor expected some financial contribution from me and I could not blame him. I was a personality unknown in his world.

Teresa had repeatedly advised me to give him something but I was opposed to the idea. I did not want to force the situation. I then turned to New City Press. After some hesitation they decided to take the risk.

Meanwhile I thought that since my life had undergone

"... As I watched, I imagined that the Lord was playing with me, like the trainer at the circus was playing with his horses...."

such a radical transformation my real identity should remain as much as possible unknown. When I got the blueprints back I asked that a pen name be given me, Matteo, Matthew. It sounded like a good name for me, a poor publican.

Now this book with neither my first or last name nor with circumstances involving other people, was no longer mine. Now that I was detached from it I found new peace.

Who Am I?

The book was finally released and I received many, many letters from all over. Generally congratulatory in nature, they contained expressions of sincere concurrence which I truly had not expected. Was it possible? My fears from the past now became but emotion.

I remember receiving a letter from an elderly woman who seemed to have participated so much in the events described in the book as to have lived them with me. I would have not been surprised had she not told me she was the happy mother of twelve children with daughters and sons-in-law and a great number of grandchildren. Her family totalled nearly forty persons. She certainly had enough to fill her day and yet she was anxious to know what had happened to the characters in my book. "Where is Lucia now? How is your eye sight? And your wife, how is she?" This letter made me stop and think. It could not have been simply the personal events of the members of my family to attract such interest. Perhaps the real attraction was in the thread of God's work throughout the story.If so, dare I break it since for someone that thread was a thread of hope?

I was then compelled to answer. "My wife? She is well, in fact, she is very, very well.... She is in heaven! As for my eyes, there is only a problem with the one eye I still have," and so on.

All the interest created by the book was still a surprise for me. What did people find that was so special in the book? Unknowingly something must have filtered through, perhaps that thread? But then who am I?

One person who wrote me courageously offered a definition, as if in answer to my soul searching. It was an Augustinian nun whom I had never met. After reading "Lazarus Come Out", she wrote:

"Do you know which was the best definition that you gave of yourself? This one: 'Somebody that could rest sitting on burning coals.' What a formidable intuition. It synthesizes the dynamism that runs through the whole story."

I was left speechless. I did not remember having ever written that sentence. I went back to the book which I kept on my desk because I was working on its English edition. Sure enough, I found those lines but I had crossed them out thinking that they were superfluous, meaningless. So I was really going against myself because the nun was right, I am really like that.

This was not an isolated event. Many readers wrote and quoted sentences that touched them but which I did not recall having ever thought or written. Some friends have confided to me, though, that it often hap- ►

pens to them too to remain astonished over past intuitions of which only later do they discover the value. How can this be explained? Are we dealing with that "wind that blows where it will. You hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes"(Jn 3:8)?

We therefore do not know ourselves. But this is something to be remedied. It was with good reason that Saint Augustine prayed: "Lord, may I know you. May I know myself."

These thoughts urge me to look for a little notebook diary where I used to write my thoughts when I was in my 20's.

Here is the first entry dated March 26, 1926.

"I want to set down a program that will cover my life to its very last day. My ideal can be expressed in two words which I cannot pronounce without sending a shiver through my whole body. "Aim higher"!

Where I do not know but I feel that my soul will not put up with limits. Whatever the peak it would always be too low for me because my gaze is fixed on the stars."

So this was me at twenty-two. What courage! No wonder that after such a take off, I got stuck on the sidelines of the runway. And yet ... there was a longing for God. God was unknown to me, though, a vague concept, not able to quench my thirst. Now I understand why. In my desire to climb higher and higher in a vertical direction, there was—even stronger than my search for God—the pride of my ego, of a superman. The horizontal dimension was lacking.

I went through some more pages and I found words of exultation because I had passed the test for the government position that I wanted. Apparently there was also the need to live on this earth!

Shortly after though, I continued my dreams:

"I can see my future before me. It's a road that rises steeply but I don't see its end. Straight is the road, dusty, rocky but straight. Higher up there is the sun. It is my sun, my ideal.... Life? To what purpose? How could one live without navigating through the waves?"

Here I sense the classic refrain of Gabriele D' Annunzio: "Navigare necesse est, vivere non necesse" (To navigate is necessary, to live is not).

I went through more pages yellowed by time and I found an ardent invocation to the Christian martyrs. I was informing them that the churches were empty and their sacrifice had been useless:

"Men are blind for they have let their God grow old. Yes, he came back in order to die. Christ is dead and has not yet risen...."

There are the earmarks of Nietzsche's influence on me here. I couldn't resist reading a few more pages. There's a young woman involved: first love, first disappointment. Then the dairy abruptly breaks off. I must have decided that the ideal I was pursuing was illusory.

I had buried Christ and I was preparing to live the best I could. I married and for many years I thought that conjugal love and the love for my children could fill my life. I was to discover very soon that all of this did not exhaust the potential of my being: I absorbed myself in art and I began to write art reviews for a magazine called "Futurism," even though the futuristic movement no longer offered anything new.

Half a century has passed and I myself do not know where I would have ended up if the light enkindled within me did not enlighten also what is outside of me. Now the problem of who I am is not a problem anymore. When I pray, I try to go beyond my daily cross to reach the heart of the Risen Lord. My nothingness then disappears and the love of God invades me. He becomes more myself than me and I have no more questions to ask.

To Speak About Myself

The other day I was thinking about my writing and I had a doubt whether I should continue. Was it right to speak constantly about myself? My intention, I repeat, has always been one of sharing with others what I have received as a gift, but I feared now that there might be a tinge of showing off. I had my answer when I opened by chance a book by Mother Marie Yvonne titled, "Letters to a Non Believer." I was struck by her writings. Marie Yvonne had been a famous actress before becoming a Benedictine.

It would be hard to find a more interesting nun than her! Listen to one of her letters:

"Today I don't feel like going on ... yet neither am I touched

(Continued on page 28)

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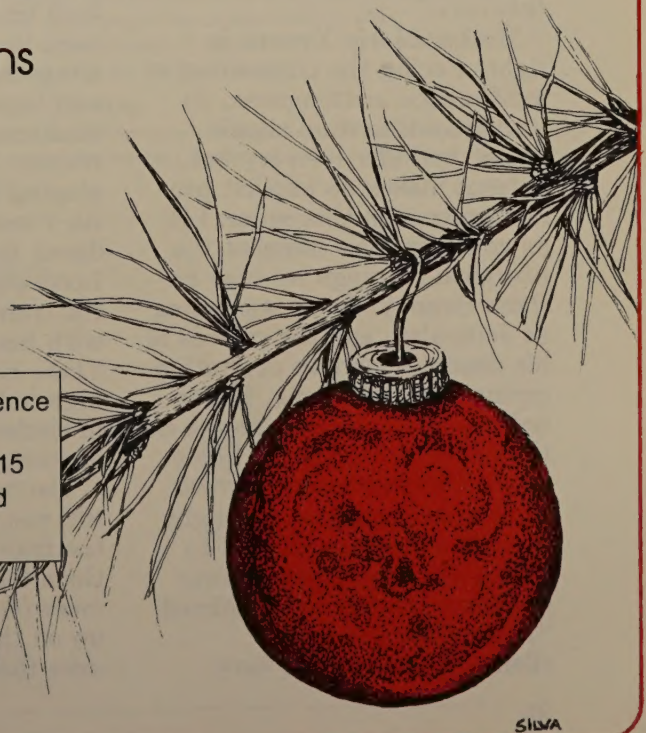

(Continued from page 26)

by the virtuous horror of talking about myself. Not in the least!

I am always more convinced of the need for christians to speak of themselves, of the story of God in them. Yesterday I came across a sentence on the subject by Father Carre', (the Lenten preacher of Notre Dame, in case you don't know) and I made note of it. It says: "The only way to bear witness is, through a personal experience, to bear witness to the love which is in the heart of God...."

To try to love God, to seek to encounter the love of God, yes this engages us to speak of God, of his life in us. We have no right to be silent. In fact, in our times, before technology truimphant and without a soul, we should cry out ... and Jean Paul Sartre hearing this cry would not be able to say "God is dead in the heart of believers."

Mother Marie Yvonne is right! Facing the outpouring of indifference, nothingness, obscenity, a Christian should speak, perhaps even cry out.

Jesus makes an explicit pronouncement in this sense. Let us consider for a moment the liturgical readings we hear on Palm Sunday. Jesus was going to Jerusalem and the crowds of his disciples were in exultation crying out:" Hosanna, Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd became indignant at the sight of such a clamor and said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples." But Jesus exclaimed, "If they were to keep silence, I tell you the very stones would cry out"(Lk 19:40).

How fascinating Jesus is! But I will not cry out. In a whisper I will continue to tell the story of God, as Mother Marie Yvonne would call it. Now, for instance, I would like to confess that there are moments when it seems to me that the Lord treats me without mercy as if I were.... Well, I gave in to the desire of sharing and here it is.

The Last Gallop

A few days ago to make my grandson happy, I accompanied him to the circus. There I found some old friends who, not having seen me in the usual circles, asked me to what blessed place I had gone for a restful retreat. I answered the question evasively. Within me I thought: What rest! The focolare is not a cozy nook!

Meanwhile a beautiful group of horses entered the ring to a loud burst of applause. They were magnificent. They pranced altogether, moving backward and forward according to the slightest gesture of their trainer. They seemed to be playing a game of obedience. As I watched, my mind wandered and I imagined that the Lord was playing with me, like the trainer at the circus played with his horses. The trainer! There he is with his whip held high inducing them to run, turn in circles or jump over obstacles.

The horses try at times to run out towards the exit but the trainer energetically calls them back and demands even more of them. He orders them up on their hind legs, then he asks them to bow, bending their knees all the way to the ground and finally, they bow their heads up and down, as if to say thank you, thank you.

In the end, the horses leave the ring to a thunderous round of applause. Everyone is happy, perhaps the horses are too, even though they are tired due to the attention required of them. The great number of children under the tent continue to applaud. They want an encore. The horses then are called back into the ring for the last gallop. They gallop just for them, for the children who are happy with so little. It is enough to see them gallop. They don't notice the mistakes the horses make as they run.

If this is so, I thought to myself, if it is enough to run towards the goal without worrying about the obstacles or the place I come in. At the end of the race I will do as they do: my courageous and last gallop. I will also play the game of obedience now that I have learned not to do it sluggishly. Arduous is the effort but the trainer ultimately is good and I will do all I can to make him happy. I cannot forget, on the other hand, that it was I who went searching for him ... this trainer!

The pure of heart know—right?—that in these exercises you never seem to reach perfection. To stand on your hind legs is not difficult because even wild horses know how to do it. It is to kneel down that is hard and to always nod your head to say "yes, yes, thank you, thank you."

Now the performance is over. The crowd leaves and silence returns under the enormous tent. *(to be continued)*

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT —SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

FOCOLARE ADDRESSES IN NORTH AMERICA

CHICAGO:
P.O. Box 53426
Chicago, IL 60653

SAN ANTONIO:
P.O. Box 15726
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